

Relationship between social-emotional competence and teaching skills of secondary school teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between social-emotional competence (SEC) and teachers' teaching skills (TTS) among a sample of 328 secondary school teachers in the Petaling Utama District, Selangor. The quantitative research employs the social, and emotional learning (CASEL) model to assess SEC and the Malaysian Teacher Standards provided by the Ministry of Education to evaluate TTS. The findings indicate that the overall level of TTS is slightly higher, with an average score of 3.282, compared to the SEC's average score of 3.212. through Pearson correlation analysis, the study identifies a significant positive relationship between various SEC elements such as self-awareness (SA), self-management (SM), social awareness (SOA), relationship skills (RS), and making rational decision (MRD) and TTS, with RS demonstrating the highest correlation at $r=0.562$, $p<0.05$. Further analysis using multiple regression reveals that SEC elements significantly contribute to variations in TTS, with SM emerging as the most significant predictor, showing a Beta value of 0.248 (24.8%). The study underscores the critical role that SEC plays in enhancing TTS, suggesting that beyond traditional training, a more in-depth and sustained focus on developing SEC could lead to significant improvements in teacher competency. Future research is recommended to continue exploring this connection to further enhance educational outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education in Malaysia is undergoing dynamic changes to adapt to the current environment, and it will continue to evolve according to the environment's needs. According to Maiors *et al.* [1], one theory in education is that the quality of teachers depends on their competence, and the quality of teachers determines the quality of learning and student achievement. A statement released by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2009) also indicates that only teachers who possess quality, skills, qualifications, interest, commitment, and an educator's mentality are eligible to be teachers. Therefore, the direction of education should focus on the social-emotional competence (SEC) of teachers determine the competence of teachers, and impact the quality of teachers contributing to the quality of education in a country [2].

According to Oliveira *et al.* [3], in the era of globalization and today's information technology advancement, work pressure is very apparent among workers in any profession, whether in the private or public sector. This is because the causes and pressures experienced by workers need to be detected early as it affects the performance and quality of workers. Ultimately, it will have negative effects and implications for the

organization [4], [5]. According to Liu and Li [6], work-related stress adversely affects organizations' personal performance and efficiency levels. The teaching profession is considered one of the most emotionally demanding professions, which can affect mental health and well-being [7]. It is also associated with episodes of stress and burnout. A study conducted in Mexico with 549 teachers from various fields confirmed that SEC can affect burnout and that teachers, in general, have low emotional autonomy. Therefore, it is important to enhance teachers' skills to avoid personal and professional burnout [8].

Another study conducted on 224 elementary school teachers in the United States [9] showed the effects of a program designed to improve teacher stress by increasing awareness and resilience [10]. The findings showed a significant decrease in psychological stress, a reduction in pain-related issues, and physical discomfort, and a significant improvement in emotional regulation and several dimensions of awareness [11]. Therefore, the SEC of teachers has become relevant to their mental health, as confirmed by a systematic review of social and emotional learning interventions for teachers, showing positive effects on well-being and psychological stress [12], [13].

It is widely known that the SEC of teachers is considered a protective factor against stressful situations [14]. This means that teachers' SEC can improve teachers' mental well-being and feelings of self-efficacy in the classroom [15]. It is also relevant if teachers are individuals implementing social-emotional learning programs for students [16]. Literature by Mella *et al.* [8] presents extensive evidence to consider SEC as a determinant in enhancing the quality of education, as it improves teacher-student relationships and classroom climate. Teachers with high levels of SEC can establish positive relationships among students in the classroom [17]. As a result of these positive effects, SEC indirectly improves students' academic performance [18], [19]. Therefore, there is a connection between teachers' SEC levels and their competency levels.

In the context of Malaysia, to ensure that teachers produce high-quality work, three main aspects are emphasized through the practice of professional teaching values, knowledge and understanding, and the practice of teaching and learning skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009), namely the Malaysian teacher standards (SGM). SGM aims to identify the professional competency levels of teachers in the practical aspects of professional teaching values, knowledge, and understanding, as well as the training agency and institutions at the preparation and implementation stages to ensure that teachers achieve high proficiency levels in all areas [20]. In 2013, after the Ministry of Education Malaysia set general competency targets for teachers, many researchers are still discussing issues occurring among teachers.

The diversity of challenges occurring in the current education system has led to implications for the lack of teacher competency standards in Malaysia [20]. This issue was discussed by Pau *et al.* [21] concerning the implications of the diminishing Malaysian Competency Standards in education. This issue has been linked to service, job stress [22], role conflict, role ambiguity, the absence of a social support system from principals/headmasters and colleagues (which leads to many teachers resigning or retiring early), and burnout among teachers [23]–[30]. This situation affects the quality of education in our country. Therefore, this matter should be taken seriously by various parties, and appropriate actions need to be implemented.

2. METHOD

2.1. Design

This study was conducted using a quantitative research design in the form of a survey to determine the relationship between SEC and teaching skills (TS) of secondary school teachers in the Petaling Utama district, Selangor. Additionally, this study aims to determine the contribution between SEC and the TS of Teachers. For data collection purposes, the research instrument used is a questionnaire in the form of a Google form. The method of collecting data is based on the questionnaire form distributed online and completed by respondents. The questionnaire instrument consists of three sections: section A on the demographics of respondents, section B to detect the level of SEC of secondary school teachers, and section C to detect the level of TS of secondary school teachers.

2.2. Respondent

This research was carried out in several secondary schools around the Petaling Utama district. According to Perry *et al.* [23], to achieve research objectives, it is suggested that researchers research the target population. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between the variables studied; the study population consists of secondary school teachers. The respondents selected for the study are permanent teachers and not temporary teachers or practice teachers. The study will involve 328 respondents to be randomly selected from several secondary schools in the Petaling Utama district.

2.3. Instrument

The quantitative method was used by the researcher following the implementation of the instrument, which is a set of open and closed-ended questionnaires. Based on this method, the researcher

used a set of specific items in the questionnaire distributed to respondents as shown in Table 1. The questionnaire tool uses the SPSS version 28.0 for item analysis using a 4-point Likert scale.

SEC was measured using the SEC questionnaire instrument [24], a 22-item Likert-type scale, consisting of statements that assess the subjective level of 5 core competencies, proposed by social, and emotional learning (CASEL) [25]: self-awareness (SA), self-management (SM), social awareness (SOA), relationship skills (RS), and making rational decision (MRD) [1]. Participants need to indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) their degree of agreement with the statements. Higher scores on the subscales indicate very high SEC. The total score is the sum of the subscale scores. The reliability analysis results showed good psychometric properties for the total score.

2.4. Procedure

The quantitative method (SPSS Windows version 28.0) within the social sciences statistical software package was utilized to analyze all collected data. By employing descriptive methods, the results of all analyses will be presented in table form, showing percentages, frequencies, and mean values. In this study, descriptive analysis was used to address all five sections. Through the survey questions, a study of competencies such as SA, SM, SOA, RS, and responsible decision-making can be conducted.

Table 1. Statistical methods for data analysis

No.	Study aspects	Statistical methods	Correlation and regression testing (inferential statistics)	Statistical methods
1	Demographics/respondent information	Descriptive statistics	There is a relationship between teachers' SEC and their TS	Pearson's coefficient
2	What are the levels of teachers' SEC and TS?	Descriptive statistics	There is a contributory construct between SEC and teachers' teaching skills (TTS)	Multiple regression

3. RESULTS

3.1. Data demographics

There are 26 schools and 2 form 6 colleges with a total of 2200 secondary school teachers in the Petaling Utama district, Selangor. Out of the 28 potential schools for the study, the researcher randomly selected 9 schools. Therefore, after referring to Krejcie and Morgan [26], with a population of 2200, the minimum sample required to be respondents is 327 individuals, selected through simple random sampling. Consequently, the number of respondents used by the researcher is 328 individuals.

Table 2 shows the profile of study respondents based on the categories below. Based on the data, the number of female respondents was a high percentage compared to male respondents with a difference of 48.2%, consisting of 85 men and 243 women. Generally, the majority of female respondents reflect the phenomenon of the number of female teachers in schools in Malaysia exceeding the number of male teachers.

Table 2. Respondent profile (N=328)

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	85	25.9
	Female	243	74.1
Experience as a teacher	<5 years	50	15.2
	5-10 years	68	20.7
	10-20 years	114	34.8
	>20 years	96	29.3
Field	Language	91	27.7
	Humanities	75	29.9
	Science and mathematics	96	29.3
	Vocational and technical	55	16.8
	Others	11	3.3
Level of education	Diploma	6	1.8
	Degree	267	81.4
	Master	53	16.2
	PhD	2	0.6
Position held	Academic teacher	251	76.5
	Form 6 teacher	8	2.4
	Senior subject teacher	58	17.7
	Assistant head teacher	11	3.4
Experience as a class teacher	<5 years	96	29.3
	5-10 years	127	38.7
	10-20 years	76	23.2
	> 20 years	29	8.8

3.2. Descriptive analysis of SEC

About 5 elements of SEC are used to measure the level of SEC as shown in Table 3. From Table 3, the SA element received the highest mean score, and the lowest mean score was for SOA. The mean scores in the construct of teachers' SEC exceed 3.800, indicating that respondents agree with the presence of SEC elements possessed by secondary school teachers in the schools studied. In addition to the high mean values, the low standard deviation values also imply that respondents agree with the items presented for the factors studied.

Table 3. Overall mean analysis for SEC (N=328)

SEC	Item	Mean (3.212)	Standard deviation (0.421)	Level
SA	S1 to S6	3.247	0.456	Moderate
SM	S7 to S10	3.194	0.500	Moderate
SOA	S11 to S14	3.185	0.478	Moderate
RS	S15 to S18	3.207	0.483	Moderate
MRD	S19 to S22	3.211	0.483	Moderate

3.3. Descriptive analysis of TS

About 4 elements of TS are used to measure the level of TTS as shown in Table 4. Based on Table 4, the classroom management skills element received the highest mean score, and the lowest mean score was for the skill of implementing teaching and learning. The mean scores in the construct of TTS exceed 3.800, indicating that respondents agree with the presence of TS elements possessed by teachers in the schools studied.

Overall, the mean analysis of both elements is at a moderate level by teachers in all the involved schools based on the respondents' perceptions in this study. However, it was found that the level of TS is higher with a mean score of 3.282 compared to the level of SEC with a mean score of 3.212. This illustrates that TS need attention to improve this level.

Table 4. Overall mean analysis for TTS (N=328)

TTS	Item	Mean (3.282)	Standard deviation (0.386)	Level
Skills in preparing teaching and learning plans	S1 to S11	3.281	0.395	Moderate
Skills in implementing teaching and learning	S12 to S19	3.257	0.417	Moderate
Skills in monitoring, assessing and evaluation	S20 to S21	3.284	0.479	Moderate
Classroom management skills	S22 to S24	3.348	0.463	Moderate

3.4. Inferential findings

Relationship between SEC and TTS teachers. Second research question: is there a relationship between the elements of SEC and the TS of secondary school teachers in the Petaling Utama district?

- Ho1: there is no relationship between the elements of SEC and TS of secondary school teachers in the Petaling Utama district.
- Ho1a: there is no relationship between SA and the TTS.
- Ho1b: there is no relationship between SM and the TTS.
- Ho1c: there is no relationship between SOA and the TTS.
- Ho1d: there is no relationship between RS and the TTS.
- Ho1e: there is no relationship between MRD and TTS.

Pearson correlation analysis to identify the relationship between elements of SEC and TTS. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis based on Table 5. In Table 5, the correlation results indicate that all elements have a positive relationship and a moderate level of relationship strength. RS have the highest correlation at $r=0.562$, $p<0.05$, and SA has the lowest correlation at $r=0.427$, $p<0.05$ towards TTS.

Overall, from the correlation analysis in Table 5, with all variables having a value of $p<0.05$, $n=328$, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between SA, SM, SOA, RS, and MRD decisions towards TTS, leading to an improvement in the level of TS. Thus, this situation indicates that the construct SEC is a factor in TS at secondary schools in the main district of Petaling.

3.5. Contribution of variance of SEC elements towards TTS

Third research question: is there a contribution of variance from the elements of SEC (SA, SM, SOA, RS, and MRD) to the TS of secondary school teachers in the main district of Petaling? Ho2: there is no relationship between the contribution of variance from the elements of SEC (SA, SM, SOA, RS, and MRD) and the TS of secondary school teachers in the main district of Petaling.

Table 5. Pearson correlation analysis results between SEC elements and TTS

	Variable	TTS	SA	SM	SOA	RS	MRD
TTS	Pearson	1	.427**	.559**	.520**	.562**	.549**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
	N	328	328	328	328	328	328
SA	Pearson	.427**	1				
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001					
	N	328	328				
SM	Pearson	.559**		1			
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001					
	N	328		328			
SOA	Pearson	.520**			1		
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001					
	N	328			328		
RS	Pearson	.562**				1	
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001					
	N	328				328	
MRD	Pearson	.549**					1
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001					
	N	328					328

**Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (2-tailed)

Multiple regression analysis to identify the relationship between the contribution of variance from the elements of SEC and the TTS. The results of the multiple regression analysis based on Table 6. Tests were also conducted to identify the significant contribution of each predictor, and the test results showed that only three elements of SEC significantly contribute to the TTS. The analysis results found that SM (Beta=0.248, $p<0.05$) contributes 24.8%, RS (Beta=0.233, $p<0.05$) contributes 23.3%, and MRD (Beta=0.163, $p<0.05$) contributes 16.3%. Based on the Beta value of 0.248 (24.8%), SM is identified as the highest significant contributor or the most significant predictor compared to other elements towards the TTS.

Table 6. Results of multiple regression analysis for the contribution of variance of SEC elements with TTS

	Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig-t
	(Constant)	1.619		12.205	0.001
	SM	0.192	0.248	3.214	0.001
	RS	0.187	0.233	2.945	0.003
	MRD	0.130	0.163	1.983	0.048
	F	38.334	R	0.611	
	Sig-F	0.001	R ²	0.373	

Referring to the R^2 value (0.373), 37.3% of the variance in TS of teachers is explained by the three constructs of emotional-social competence: SM, RS, and MRD. Additionally, the relationship between all constructs of SEC towards the TS of teachers was found to be moderate with an R-value of 0.611. In conclusion, the elements of SM, RS, and MRD have a significant relationship with the TTS [31]–[34]. However, SM is the highest significant contributing factor to the TTS among secondary school teachers in the main district of Petaling.

4. CONCLUSION

The question of how we need to prepare teachers to meet the needs of students in the classroom and the diversity of demands in the teaching profession in the 21st century challenges the minds of policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents. Teaching and learning practices that emphasize social-emotional aspects are actually under the supervision of the educational environment. As the issues of mental health disturbances and psychopathology are on the rise, schools are expected to provide the necessary protection for those involved. Although research supporting the importance of teachers' SEC is still inconsistent, this does not apply to teachers, who, recognize the crucial role they play every day in the classroom and school. As administrators themselves, they need to pay attention as

leaders and managers in education, namely to the nature of stress and burnout faced among teachers in the workplace. This leads to an impact on the success and well-being of the students themselves, besides the decreasing quality of teachers.

Although the study was conducted only to understand the relationship between social-emotional competencies and TTS, the SEC element can have a significant impact on fostering teachers' ability to transform their own SEC. These skills can be imparted during teachers' education in the field of education. Moreover, courses can also be given to teachers to master and enhance their SEC. Like any learned skill, it requires repetition and practice. Therefore, continuous, holistic skill-based training, using a combination of strategies and given to serving teachers, is essential.

This certainly requires full support from the Ministry of Education, State Education Departments, District Education Offices, and schools, as suggested by, through its implementation process, encouraging continuous training from all stakeholders. Furthermore, the researcher strongly supports the involvement of specialized health initiatives for educators and the development of yoga teacher training courses abroad, as an example developed by the breath for change team for yoga alliance certified. This suggestion is to form part of the teacher training program used in the profession, administrators, and other staff, and possibly also parents. It is hoped that this ideal effort can grow and has the potential to enhance the SEC of all school community members. In conclusion, training to develop SEC should start from the teacher education level and continue for teachers in service.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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Nor Zairos Abu Zarim	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [SS], upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy concerns related to research participants. No third-party data were used in this study.

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